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LETTER DATED 13 OCTOBER 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In paragraphs 22 and 23 of my last report on Guinea-Bissau of 29 September 1999 (S/1999/1015), I indicated that I had dispatched a small mission to Guinea-Bissau and the neighbouring countries in order to look into the transitional Government's request for international military observers to monitor the situation along the borders with Guinea and Senegal and provide a measure of confidence among the population during the electoral process. I further indicated that the mission had submitted its report, which was under consideration, and that I would revert to the Council on the subject as soon as possible.

In its report, the mission found that the situation along the borders with Guinea and Senegal was tenuous and recommended the deployment of approximately 200 military observers. After considering their recommendation, I concluded that it would be preferable at this juncture to decide on the following interim measures, while keeping the option of deploying international military observers under review:

(a) To request that my Representative, Samuel Nana-Sinkam, and his Military Adviser visit the countries that the mission had consulted, namely Senegal, Guinea and the Gambia, and visit the secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States. The purpose of such a visit would be to brief these parties on the general thrust of the report and to encourage Senegal and Guinea to set up, with Guinea-Bissau, joint monitoring mechanisms along their common borders and other confidence-building measures;

(b) To request that the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office (UNOGBIS) develop a coordinated programme of frequent visits by my Representative, the United Nations country team and the diplomatic community to towns and villages throughout Guinea-Bissau during the weeks prior to the elections;

(c) To actively encourage an early and positive response by those Member States that have been requested by the interim Government to send electoral observers.

It is hoped that the enhanced visibility resulting from (b) and (c) above will provide a measure of confidence among the population during the electoral process and send an unmistakable signal that the international community will be closely watching this process.

In the light of the results of these interim measures, I will reassess the situation and revert to the Council on the issue of international military observers, should the situation so warrant.

I should be grateful, Mr. President, if you would bring the contents of this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN